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The Jar of Olives



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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

The Jar of Olives

A Play in Four Acts
from
The Arabian Nights

Given by the National School of Elocution and Oratory,
Philadelphia, March, 1914.



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The Jar of Olives

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The Jar of Olives

CHARACTERS

HAROUN AL RASCHID	Caliph of Bagdad
THE GRAND VIZIER.	
THE CADÍ	a magistrate
ALI COGIA	a merchant of antiques
HOUSSAIN	a corn merchant
AIBOU	a leather merchant
NOUREDDIN	a gardener
AHMED	an olive grower
GANEM	a fruit seller
MUSTAPHA	
ZANTOUT	
BAKBARAH	
YUSUF	slaves
ASSAD	a boy
BADOURA	betrothed to Ali Cogia
FATIMA	Badoura's mother
ZILLAH	Assad's mother
Courtiers, Attendants, Slaves, etc.	

PROPERTIES

ACT I.—Jars and curios to be packed, tray with coffee set, large silk girdle for Badoura's gift, mirror for Fatima, jar with imitation gold pieces and olives in it.

ACT II.—A basket of fruit for the feast, the same jar of gold and olives, a dish of good olives.

ACT IV.—The jar of olives, a broom for Zillah.

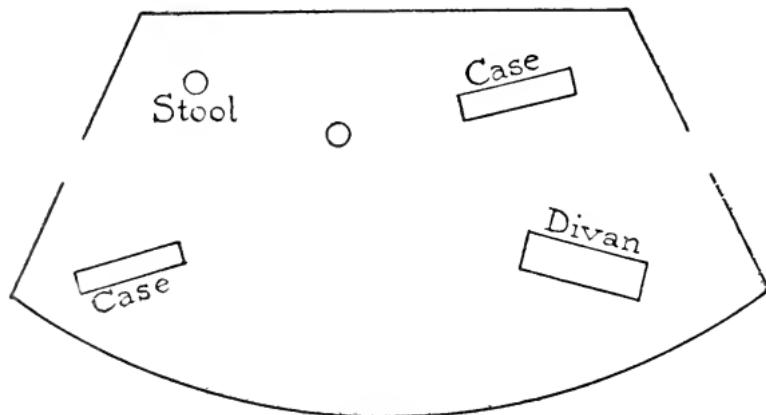
STORY OF THE PLAY

Ali Cogia of Bagdad, a dealer in antiques and curios, is about to take a journey to Cairo, to trade there for three years. He leaves in the care of his friend Houssain his betrothed wife, Badoura, and also leaves with Houssain a sealed jar of olives, in the bottom of which Ali has concealed

a golden treasure. After Ali's departure Houssain courts and wins Badoura. At a feast he gives to Badoura, the Caliph, the ruler of Bagdad, disguised as a merchant, is present. Houssain, to please Badoura, opens the jar of olives, and finds them spoiled. After his guests have gone Houssain discovers and appropriates the gold. The jar is refilled with fresh olives. Ali, given up for dead, unexpectedly returns, demands his jar, and receives—only olives. He accuses Houssain before the Cadi, but has no proof. Thereupon Assad, a youth, assures the Caliph, still disguised, that he could prove Houssain guilty. The Caliph puts Assad in the seat of the Cadi (magistrate), and the case is retried. Assad proves by olive merchants that the olives in the jar are less than a year old. They cannot therefore be those that Ali left with Houssain four years ago. Houssain confesses, the Caliph commands him to return the treasure, and the fickle Badoura loses both her lovers.

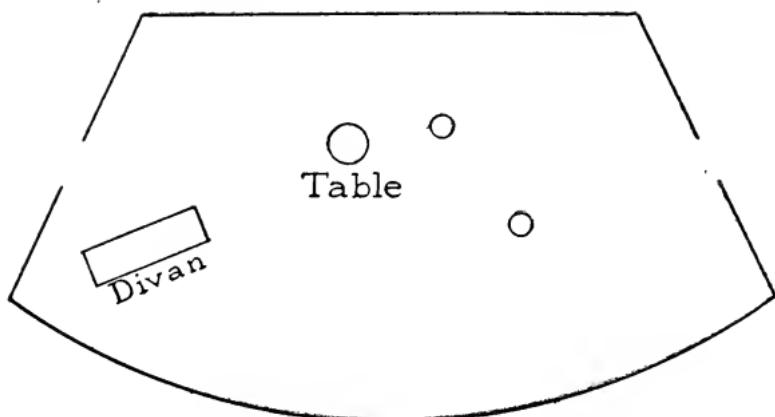
SCENE PLOTS

ACT I



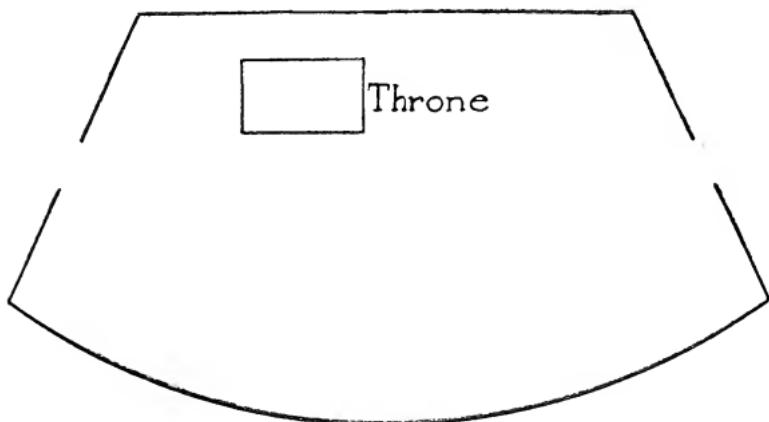
SCENE.—Room in Ali Cogia's house. Bare walls of neutral tint. Floor covered with rugs; packing cases and straw littered about.

ACT II



SCENE.—Low table in center holds the olives. Women sit on divan, men on rugs on the floor.

ACT III



SCENE.—Bare room except for throne, which is a large chair set on a platform, covered with rugs.

COSTUMES

The rich, beautiful costumes which add much to this play had better be obtained at a professional costumer's. They can, however, be made at home, with the following directions.

MALE. The turban is made by braiding three strips of bright colored cheese-cloth into a broad band to go about the head. The crown is a piece of cheese-cloth sewed to this band. The cape and sash may be fashioned out of any convenient window curtain, table cover, or odd length of colored, plaid or striped material.

FEMALE. The women generally wear a veil, kept in place by the turban and reaching to the shoulders. As with the male characters, a very beautiful effect may be obtained if the resources of the ordinary home are skilfully adapted to the various characters.

The pictures will give a clear idea of the costume for male and female characters.





The Jar of Olives

ACT I

SCENE.—*Room in ALI COGIA's house. Entrances R. and L. Packing is in process; numbers of cases stand about; a litter of straw; slaves coming and going with packages. ALI COGIA and HOUSSAIN engaged in conversation down R.*

ALI COGIA. Nay, Houssain, there is no other way. Nought is left me in Bagdad. (*To slave, angrily.*) Have a care of that package, thou worthless one. He carries priceless porcelain as if it were so much pumice-stone.

HOUSSAIN. Why, then, risk a journey to Cairo for it? Surely there be those in Bagdad that will give thee thy price?

ALI COGIA. In Bagdad, sayest thou? In Bagdad men care nought but for the vile, the grotesque, the hideous. What is now reckoned the choicest gift for the innocent babe? Some houri modestly robed in silken tunic and trousers? Nay, but a loathsome Djinn with blackened visage, grinning mouth, and goggling eyes. Oh, Art, Art, where is now thy home?

HOUSSAIN (*yawning*). Nay, if thou feelest so acutely! But what says thy bride, the lovely Badoura?

ALI COGIA. It is for her sake I go.

HOUSSAIN. Methought 'twas for thy porcelain.

ALI COGIA. I go to provide a peerless setting for my peerless jewel, and how shall that be unless I find a market for my works of art?

HOUSSAIN. Ay, the fair Badoura requires of her husband a casket befitting her worth.

ALI COGIA. And rightly too. Dost thou blame her? (*Crash without.*) Maledictions on those butter-fingered rascals. I must go see — Yusuf, Yusuf —

(*Exit, L.*)

HOUSSAIN (*fingering curios*). Truly, a rich assortment ! Ivories, carvings, mirrors, jewels ; the fool hath wit enough to collect, but no skill to sell. Were half these treasures mine, Badoura should be mine too — May a broken-kneed camel lose him in the desert, and a djinn of darkness keep him there !

(*Reënter ALI COGIA, L., with an aged merchant, AIBOU.*)

ALI COGIA (*to AIBOU*). Truly, my time is yours. Have I not till this eve to set mine affairs in order ? (*Claps hands for slaves* ; *enter YUSUF, L.*) Bring coffee, Yusuf.

(*YUSUF salams and withdraws, R.*)

HOUSSAIN. I will leave thee, Ali, for the present. I see thou hast business.

ALI COGIA. 'Tis true the venerable Aibou would fain to see my poor house, if, perchance, it should suit his needs. But come again, Houssain, at eve. Thine must be the last hand I press, thine the last face I look upon ere I set forth for Cairo. (*Exit HOUSSAIN, R.* ; *enter YUSUF, R., with coffee*. *To AIBOU.*) I see thou regardest my embroidery. Yonder is a rare specimen ; I had it from Cathay.

AIBOU. Nay, I have seen its match in the ante-chamber of Haroun's summer palace. How dost thou intend to dispose of thy house—empty, or with its plenishings ?

ALI COGIA. My curios go with me ; thou knowest they are my merchandise, even as thine is leather. Yet much that is rare and beautiful I leave behind. There is a chamber — (*Breaks off, and falls into a reverie.*)

AIBOU. A chamber—are there not seven ?

(*Consults a roll of parchment.*)

ALI COGIA. Seven—there are ten ! But that of which I speak —

AIBOU. Speak then ; I hearken.

ALI COGIA. Far in the distance rise the blue hills.

AIBOU. But what of the interior ?

ALI COGIA. Blue also—blue as the turquoise.

AIBOU (*still consulting the roll*). Thine office, perchance ?

ALI COGIA (*indignantly*). Office, forsooth ? The chamber for my promised bride.

AIBOU. H'm. And the slaves' quarters?

ALI COGIA (*curtly*). Two rooms.

AIBOU. That is enough. The rest I remember from thy father's time. I will give thee fifteen hundred gold pieces.

ALI COGIA. Fifteen hundred gold pieces! No more than that? (*Footsteps without.*) Even now she comes. My Badoura! She comes with her mother to bid me farewell. Thou wilt grant me a few moments. (*Enter BADOURA and FATIMA, L., veiled.* AIBOU *withdraws to the back of the room, and occupies himself in inspecting the furniture.* ALI COGIA *advances to FATIMA.*) Most radiant lady, even my misfortune is my blessing, in that it brings thee to my poor house. Beauteous Badoura, I prostrate myself at thy feet.

(*The ladies seat themselves on a divan down L.*)

FATIMA. Oh, my dear Ali, how exhausted I am. The heat—the dust—the flies—and those dreadful men!

ALI COGIA. You fill my soul with alarm! What men?

BADOURA (*curtly*). She means the camels!

FATIMA. Isn't that what I said, child? Spraddling all over the road—ever so much bigger than when I was young!

ALI COGIA. But, honored maiden, why choose you the road of the camel-drivers?

FATIMA. Our faithful Ganem assured me that it was the most suitable way.

BADOURA. So it is! For camels and asses!

FATIMA. Peace, insolent one! Of a truth, Ali, I know not what hath bewitched the maidens of this day. When I was young —

BADOURA. Old history, that. (*To ALI COGIA.*) So thou beginnest thy long journey to-morrow?

ALI COGIA. Alas, a long, long journey, each step carrying me far from all that I hold dear.

BADOURA. So thou takest not thy curios with thee?

ALI COGIA. Verily, I do. In Cairo there be those that appreciate the beautiful, and value him who displays it. Shall I show thee my —

BADOURA. Thou showedst it me last time.

ALI COGIA (*offended*). I had it not, then.

BADOURA (*crossly*). What?

ALI COGIA. A girdle of the rarest, fit to have zoned the Queen of Sheba—lustrous with delicate embroidery.

BADOURA. Show it me.

(ALI COGIA *produces girdle.*)

FATIMA. Give it to me, daughter. (BADOURA *clasps it round her own waist.*) Beautiful indeed, Ali. It must have cost thee many a piastre. A thousand, perchance?

ALI COGIA. A thousand! I shall sell it for five thousand in Cairo.

BADOURA (*coquettishly*). Thou wilt sell it?

ALI COGIA. Sell it? Ay, of a truth. (*Hesitates and grasps her meaning.*) Unless thou wilt wear it?

BADOURA. Doth it become me? Nay, I am no Queen of Sheba.

ALI COGIA. But thou art Queen of Beauty. Wilt thou wear my poor gift?

BADOURA. Oh, Ali!

FATIMA. Truly, it is good to be young. Time was when lovers laid their gifts at *my* feet.

BADOURA. Men's tastes have changed since then.

FATIMA. Ah, daughter, daughter, the young have now no reverence for the old. If aught is given to me now, it is but to propitiate.

ALI COGIA. Nay, mother, thou takest Badoura's words amiss. If thou wilt deign to accept this poor gift from one who reveres thee—look but in it and thou wilt see the truth, and no unpleasing truth. It is a mirror of age-long antiquity, though now it mirrors youth.

FATIMA. Oh, fie, Ali, fie. Thus to flatter the old woman.

(AIBOU *coughs in the background.*)

ALI COGIA (*starting*). Thy pardon, worthy merchant. Thou hast waited long, but here be matters which touch me nearly. Permit me, madam, to present to you the worthy merchant, Aibou, who would purchase my poor dwelling.

AIBOU (*cautiously*). If terms can be arranged.

(AIBOU and FATIMA *engage in conversation with much gesticulation.*)

ALI COGIA (*to BADOURA*). Ah, my beloved, when this sun sets, there is a long night before me. Many moons shall my sleepless eyes see rise and wane ere I return to thee.

BADOURA. Why dost thou leave me?

ALI COGIA. Canst thou ask? Go I not forth, an exile,

into the desert, that I may win thee the sooner a home worthy of thee?

BADOURA. Cairo is no desert. Many other maidens and fairer —

ALI COGIA. There is no Badoura there, therefore is Cairo but a desert to me.

BADOURA. And when wilt thou return?

ALI COGIA. In three years! Three brief years.

BADOURA (*weeping*). Brief, perchance, to thee; but what of me?

ALI COGIA. Wilt thou indeed miss me? Nay, but that thought shall comfort me in my toil.

BADOURA. And art thou sure of prospering?

ALI COGIA. Thou shalt see me return the wealthiest merchant in all Bagdad. I will bring thee gifts —

BADOURA. Ali!

ALI COGIA. Badoura!

FATIMA. Badoura! we must hasten, else will the pilau be cold. Fare thee well, Ali; in three years, say'st thou, thou wilt return? Well, well, we shall see. Farewell, Aibou.

(ALI COGIA *escorts* BADOURA and FATIMA to the door, L., and, returning, flings himself down on the divan.)

ALI COGIA. Three long years! How shall I support it? A moment since, my poor house was a palace! Now 'tis dreary as a prison cell.

AIBOU. Yet will I give thee for the cell a thousand —

ALI COGIA. What sayest thou? But a thousand?

AIBOU (*indulgently*). Pieces of gold—not piastres.

ALI COGIA. Thy memory is short. Thou didst offer me fifteen hundred.

AIBOU. Since then, thou hast parted with thy mirror, the most valuable heirloom thy house contained.

ALI COGIA. Take it. Take all! I have neither heart nor time to haggle.

AIBOU. It is here in this purse. Do thou sign this parchment, and to-morrow I take possession. (ALI COGIA *signs*.) Farewell, a prosperous journey!

ALI COGIA. Farewell. (*Exit AIBOU, L. ALI COGIA wanders about the room, picking up things in a desultory fashion.*) Ah, well-a-day! Three long years! And how if I prosper not in them? I must! I will! And yet—the way is long, and many be the perils that beset it. It were well not to

risk mine all on the journey. This gold I will leave behind. But where to store it? (*Looks about the room; takes down a jar.*) This jar, now. But with what to fill it? I have it! These olives! (*Places gold at the bottom of the jar and hastily fills it with olives, then seals the jar.*) This will I give to Houssain, when he comes, to store in his cellar. He will never suspect the contents; though, verily, I might trust him with its secret. (*Puts aside the jar, and seats himself on the divan.*) Three long years! Alas! Badoura.

(Enter HOUSSAIN, R.)

HOUSSAIN. Hast sold thy house?

ALI COGIA. Ay.

HOUSSAIN. At a fair price?

ALI COGIA. Ay.

HOUSSAIN. And bidden farewell to thy beloved?

ALI COGIA. Ay.

HOUSSAIN. Hast but one word?

ALI COGIA. Ay.

HOUSSAIN (*laughing*). Thy wit surpasses itself. I could sit and listen to thee all night, but time presseth and thou must be gone. Is there aught in which a friend can help? All that I have is at thy service—my time, my house—

ALI COGIA. Thou art a friend, indeed. If aught of ill should befall, which Allah forbid, I trust thee to play a brother's part by Badoura. (*HOUSSAIN nods his head, and presses ALI COGIA's hand.*) One trifle more I would ask of thee. Thou hast a secure cellar. (*Pauses.*)

HOUSSAIN. Ay, truly.

ALI COGIA. Wilt thou store in it this jar of olives till my return?

HOUSSAIN. Olives? No more than that? What whim is this?

ALI COGIA. A mere fancy. The last I shall have from this garden, since that old miser, Aibou, has filched it from me at his beggarly price.

HOUSSAIN. Thou wert ever a sentimentalist.

ALI COGIA. But thou wilt keep it for me?

HOUSSAIN. Ay, verily. I will guard it as my dearest treasure. And when thou returnest and art wedded to the fair Badoura, we will eat these at thy marriage feast.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—HOUSSAIN'S *apartment*. *Entrances R. and L.*
Preparations for a feast.

(Enter BAKBARAH, L., escorting the CALIPH and the GRAND VIZIER, both disguised.)

BAKBARAH. Will the most noble masters deign to be seated, while I go tell my master of the honor conferred upon him?

(Exit, L.)

CALIPH. A courtly slave. (Seats himself, R.) He could scarce be more obsequious if he knew who we are.

GRAND VIZIER. No disguise can veil the magnificence of Haroun al Raschid. Even that clod must be conscious that he speaks to no common mortal.

CALIPH. Thy flatteries grow stale, Grand Vizier! (GRAND VIZIER *salaams abjectly*.) Get up, thou mountebank. Take heed that thou betray me not this night with thy follies. So; this merchant lives well,—golden goblets, glittering crystal and damask of the finest. Verily, he has made good use of his time, seeing he is but young.

GRAND VIZIER. May it prove that his wealth is honestly got! Yet hath the bazaar a thousand tales of his bargains.

CALIPH. So?

GRAND VIZIER. As Aibou, the wise merchant, saith; a man young and inexperienced attains not to such wealth as Houssain's by selling grain honestly. Men whisper—

CALIPH. And thou babblest.

(GRAND VIZIER prostrates himself and the CALIPH kicks him so that he rises, astonished, as HOUSSAIN enters R., escorting FATIMA and BADOURA.)

HOUSSAIN (L.). Pardon, worthy merchant, that I kept you waiting. I attended but the arrival of these fair ladies. (To FATIMA.) I pray you, noble lady, be seated on the divan. (The ladies recline on the divan.) Permit me to

present to your favorable consideration this worthy person, a merchant from Alexandria who has been recommended to me as deserving of esteem.

CALIPH (R.). I deem myself happy in the opportunity of having dealings with one so high-minded as Houssain, the corn merchant. Suffer me, of your condescension, to present to you my companion Giafar.

GRAND VIZIER (R., *responding to Houssain's salutation*). Many be the tales I have heard of Houssain, the rich young merchant.

FATIMA. And all to his credit, I dare aver.

GRAND VIZIER. Bagdad rings with his praise.

HOUSSAIN (*placing BADOURA at his side*). You flatter me, good sir. Fairest Badoura, long have I dreamed of the day when I should welcome thee beneath my roof.

BADOURA. Thou didst not hasten the fulfilment of thy dream.

HOUSSAIN. Had I thought the awakening could be so sweet — (*They talk together*.)

CALIPH (*to FATIMA*). In truth, I have met many merchants in Egypt; they be as the sands of the desert. This Ali Cogia, of whom thou speakest.

FATIMA. He is to wed my daughter, worthy sir.

CALIPH (*to BADOURA*). Fair fortune speed his return!

BADOURA. That may scarce be, seeing he hath lagged three years on the way.

FATIMA. Oh, my dear daughter, 'tis to gather wealth for thee that he delays.

BADOURA (*indifferently*). Nay, I care not when he returns.

HOUSSAIN. Think not too harshly of him, fairest Badoura. Yet can I but marvel —

FATIMA. What is thy marvel?

HOUSSAIN. Nay, he is my friend; yet were *I* so blest —

BADOURA. Thou would'st do the same.

HOUSSAIN. By the beard of the Prophet! There is no force should keep me from my happiness for three weary years.

CALIPH. But, peradventure, this good merchant, this Ali Cogia, sayest thou, toils to provide a home worthy of so fair a bride.

HOUSSAIN. He may toil but he will not accomplish.

Ali Cogia could never make his market out of his opportunity. 'Some need to go far to make their fortunes.'

BADOURA. Thou art not one to miss thine opportunity.

HOUSSAIN. When it rests with myself alone. But there be times when a man's fate rests in other hands.

GRAND VIZIER. It may be the merchant is no more. There be other than camel-bones in the desert.

FATIMA. Allah forbid ! 'Twas a pious youth.

BADOURA (*throwing down her spoon*). Must ye talk of bones and death at a banquet ! This jelly is turned to ashes in my mouth !

HOUSSAIN. Dearest Badoura, I pray thee to taste of this Rahat Lácoum.

BADOURA. 'Twill taste of dust.

HOUSSAIN. Nay then, this peach.

BADOURA. Dead Sea apples.

GRAND VIZIER. An olive will ofttimes prick a jaded appetite.

HOUSSAIN. Grapes be better. This bunch —

BADOURA. Nay, away with it.

HOUSSAIN. But something must thou have.

BADOURA. Well, then, an olive perhaps.

HOUSSAIN. Alas, I am undone. Olives ! Why did I not think of them ? I will send for some forthwith. (*Claps his hands.* Enter BAKBARAH, L.) Off with thee, slave, and bring me olives,—the finest in the market.

(*Exit BAKBARAH, L.*)

BADOURA. Thou art too heedful of my wishes.

HOUSSAIN. That were impossible. The Caliph's self would be happy in serving thee.

GRAND VIZIER (*angrily*). The Caliph is no slave to — !

CALIPH (*interrupting*). All men are slaves to beauty.

FATIMA. Nay, if all tales of the Caliph be true !

BADOURA. I would not be his Sultana.

GRAND VIZIER. The Caliph's name may not be lightly spoken.

BADOURA. 'Tis easy to see thou art of those who imagine the Caliph behind every screen.

GRAND VIZIER (*sputtering*). Thou riskest thy head.

CALIPH. Tales, good friend, idle tales.

FATIMA. Nay—if all tales of the Caliph be true !

CALIPH. Thou whet'st my curiosity. What be these tales?

FATIMA. Why, they say that the Caliph comes all unexpected into men's houses!

GRAND VIZIER (*desperately*). Thine olives come not, friend Houssain.

BADOURA. And we must go.

HOUSSAIN. But thou hast eaten nothing.

BADOURA. Since there be no olives—

HOUSSAIN. Where be my wits? A jar of olives! A whole jar that Ali Cogia left in my care. (*Claps hands.* Enter MUSTAPHA, r.) Slave! Mustapha! Go to the cellar and bring hither the sealed jar.

(*Exit MUSTAPHA, r.*)

BADOURA. Olives! Hath Ali Cogia left olives with thee?

HOUSSAIN. Yes, truly! A beautiful jar.

BADOURA. But olives? Wherefore olives?

HOUSSAIN. Nay, I know not. He was ever fanciful. Some whim that they were grown in his own garden. (*Enter slave, r., with sealed jar.*) Now thou shalt have thy olives.

CALIPH. Nay, good host, 'tis well sealed. Belike thy friend set some store by it.

HOUSSAIN. Pooh! Some foolish sentiment of his. He shall have olives enough if he returns.

FATIMA. But his seal! To break his seal! Nay, now, Badoura, thou hast never needed olives before.

BADOURA. It seems I may need them still.

HOUSSAIN. Not while I can give them thee.

(*Breaks seal and pours out olives; offers some to BADOURA.*)

BADOURA (*tasting one*). Houssain, wouldest thou poison me? These olives are bad;—bad these many months. Come, mother, let us go home.

(*Enter BAKBARAH, l., with good olives.*)

BAKBARAH. These be the best in the market.

HOUSSAIN. Dearest Badoura, surely thou wilt taste these olives.

BADOURA (*putting them aside*). I shall never desire to see an olive again.

FATIMA (*taking an olive*). These be good olives. But Badoura is fatigued. Why did thy friend speak of deatl

and Ali Cogia together? I like not such omens. Farewell, Houssain. Farewell, worthy sirs.

HOUSSAIN. Farewell, gracious lady. Fairest Badoura, think kindly of me.

(*Exit, L., escorting ladies.*)

CALIPH (*to Grand Vizier*). Methinks the absent Ali Cogia had done well to remember the saying, "Who woos his bride through a friend maketh the friend the bridegroom."

GRAND VIZIER. Who depends on woman, walks on water.

HOUSSAIN (*returning*). That a man's good fortune should depend on a wretched olive!

CALIPH. Alas, that my friend's tongue coupled Ali Cogia and death in the desert.

HOUSSAIN. May his tongue speak the truth. He is dead. He must be dead!

CALIPH. Thy friend?

HOUSSAIN. Friend? Nay, a fool. But be seated, I pray you, be seated! The night is still young.

CALIPH. But I and my friend must away. Our fortunes are still to make. Fare thee well.

GRAND VIZIER. Fare thee well, young sir.

CALIPH. And may thy fortunes prosper as they deserve.

(*Houssain attends them to the door, L.*)

HOUSSAIN (*flinging himself on the divan*). My fortunes, forsooth! They will not furnish many such feasts as these. Peaches, nectarines, pineapples, pomegranates, the choicest wines, the most luscious sweetmeats, all count as nothing beside an olive. An olive! And I got her olives. (*Kicks over jar in a frenzy.*) Dozens of olives! Olives ripe, olives over-ripe. (*Kicks again; gold pieces fall out of jar.*) Olives! What's that? That's not an olive! (*Picks up gold piece and hastily overturns the jar: more gold pours out.*) Gold! Gold! How in the name of the Prophet came it here? Then our simple friend was no such fool after all. And I'll be no fool either. Who finds keeps! He's dead! I tell you Ali Cogia is dead. (*Scatters the bad olives over the floor as he searches for more money.*) But if he isn't dead?—If he should come back? (*Pause while he empties the dish of fresh olives into the jar.*) He shall have his olives!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same room in Houssain's house. Present, Fatima, Badoura, and Houssain.*

HOUSSAIN. So thou art pleased, my Badoura, with thy slave's poor efforts? But all this is nought to what thou shalt have when thou art mine indeed.

BADOURA. The house, truly, is well enough for thy present fortunes.

FATIMA. Well enough, indeed! Thy father could have given me such ——!

BADOURA. But thou, the most rising merchant in Bagdad, wilt not long be content with so poor a house in so humble a street.

HOUSSAIN. Thou shalt have all and more than thou canst desire. For thy sake ——!

FATIMA. And here, in this noble chamber, thou wilt feast thy friends. Would that poor Ali Cogia might be one of them.

BADOURA. Ali Cogia, indeed!

HOUSSAIN. Ali Cogia is dead!

BAKBARAH (*entering L.*). The worthy Ali Cogia to see my master!

OMNES. Ali Cogia!

(Enter ALI COGIA, L., *travel-stained and dusty; the ladies veil themselves.*)

ALI COGIA. Houssain! My true friend! How have I longed to greet thee again! Nay, this meeting puts to flight the remembrance of many toils. But thou art not alone. (*Makes as if to withdraw; then looks more closely at BADOURA.*) Can it be? Is it possible?

FATIMA. Ali Cogia? Art thou Ali Cogia? But Ali Cogia is dead!

ALI COGIA. My Badoura! This moment atones for all! How oft in my exile have I dreamed of this meeting. My beloved!

HOUSSAIN (*interposing*). Greeting, Ali Cogia! Thy coming was unlooked for!

ALI COGIA (*clasping a hand of BADOURA and of Hous-sain*). To meet you both together—the faithful friend, the promised bride — ! It is too much happiness !

FATIMA. Oh, my dear Ali !

ALI COGIA. Pardon, dear lady, that I saw you not at once !

FATIMA. Alas, it is we who should claim thy pardon.

HOUSSAIN. Why talk of pardon ? If Ali had cared for his friends, he had not left them so long without news of him.

BADOURA. Little cared he for our tortures of suspense.

FATIMA. Truly, my eyes were dim with weeping ; but I always said —

HOUSSAIN. Thou askest much from thy friends, but little dost thou give in return.

ALI COGIA. Houssain ! what meanest thou ?

HOUSSAIN. Long have we mourned thy absence.

ALI COGIA. Yet rejoice not greatly at my return.

HOUSSAIN. Nay, thy absence needs explanation. Thou didst promise to return in three years, and here be four years gone.

ALI COGIA. They have been years of toil. Fortunes such as mine are not amassed so swiftly.

BADOURA. Thy fortune ?

ALI COGIA. Ay, truly ; camels loaded with rich gifts have I brought.

HOUSSAIN. I hear them not without.

ALI COGIA. Nay, within three days of Bagdad I was set upon and robbed —

HOUSSAIN (*mockingly*). So thy camels are thine no longer ?

ALI COGIA. 'Tis but a brief delay.

BADOURA (*scornfully*). But another three years, belike.

ALI COGIA. I have means to recover them. My jar of olives, Houssain. (*To BADOURA.*) Thou shalt see, Badoura.

HOUSSAIN. Thy jar of olives ?

ALI COGIA. Ay, the jar I left in thy care !

HOUSSAIN. Thou shalt have it. (*Claps his hands : enter BAKBARAH, R.*) Slave, bring hither the jar of olives stored in my cellar. (*Exit BAKBARAH, R.*) Dost thou propose to grow rich on olives ?

FATIMA (*aside to BADOURA*). What olives be these ?

BADOURA. Peace, mother, let us see what happens.

(Reënter BAKBARAH with the jar of olives.)

HOUSSAIN. Here be thine olives. May it be permitted to a less prosperous merchant to behold the miracle that transmutes olives into gold?

BADOURA. That were a miracle indeed!

ALI COGIA. One easily worked. Behold! (Breaks the seal and begins pouring out the olives.) Here be the olives, but see what follows!

BADOURA (drily). More olives, it would seem.

ALI COGIA. Ay, but — (Shakes the jar violently. One or two more olives drop out. He peers inside and shakes and strikes the jar violently.) My gold! Where is my gold?

HOUSSAIN. Turned to olives, it would seem.

BADOURA. Even that is somewhat. The camels left no traces. (Laughs.)

ALI COGIA. This is not my jar. It cannot be.

HOUSSAIN. And wherefore not? Examine the seal. Didst thou not have to break it to open the jar?

ALI COGIA. The seal is well enough. (Examines it.) But Houssain, my gold! Where is my gold?

HOUSSAIN (derisively). Where are thy camels?

BADOURA. And thy gifts for thy bride?

FATIMA. What is this gold that Ali talks about?

ALI COGIA. The bottom of the jar was filled with gold.

HOUSSAIN. A likely tale indeed!

ALI COGIA (furiously). And thou hast stolen it!

HOUSSAIN. Have a care to thy words.

ALI COGIA. I care not what I say.

HOUSSAIN. Truly thou dost not! Thou art a liar.

ALI COGIA. I am a true man. I will swear that there was gold in the jar.

HOUSSAIN. And I will swear that thou thyself didst tell me that the jar contained olives.

FATIMA. We all know that it contained olives. Did we not see —

HOUSSAIN. Peace, lady, this is an affair for men. Thou, Ali, thou hast insulted me in my own house before these honorable ladies. Now I am prepared to swear before the Cadi that thou didst leave in my care a jar of olives.

ALI COGIA. And I will swear that gold was concealed at the bottom of them.

BADOURA. Thou hast sworn many things.

ALI COGIA (*to BADOURA, passionately*). O Badoura, Badoura! Thou who hast been my guiding-star through the dark night of exile! Hide not thy light from me now! (*She turns away and veils herself.*) Surely thou wilt believe.

BADOURA. I believe Houssain.

HOUSSAIN. Badoura! Now I know that thou art mine indeed!

ALI COGIA (*prostrating himself on the floor and beating his head*). Furies and Djinns. Will ye drive me mad? Will none believe me? (*Tears his hair and beard.*)

FATIMA. Alas! my son, thou art distraught. They were olives indeed. These eyes looked upon them.

ALI COGIA (*half raising himself*). Thou foolish old woman! These indeed are olives, but my gold —

HOUSSAIN. Enough of this! Thou hast insulted a noble lady and lied to me, thy friend. Get thee hence —

ALI COGIA. I go not without my gold.

HOUSSAIN (*threateningly*). If thou wilt not go, my slaves shall cast thee forth. (*Kicks him.*) Away.

ALI COGIA (*raising himself slowly*). I go, but think not that thou art rid of me. Thou shalt answer for this before the Cadi.

HOUSSAIN (*indifferently*). When thou wilt.

BADOURA (*throwing an olive after him*). Take thy "gold" with thee! (*Laughs.*)

ALI COGIA (*L., to BADOURA*). Heartless and fickle. (*Points to them.*) False bride! False friend! May ye live to torment each other!

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*Market-place in front of the Cadi's house. Various persons gradually assemble to witness the trial of Ali Cogia and Houssain. The CALIPH and the GRAND VIZIER are present.*

CALIPH. So the long-lost friend has appeared !

GRAND VIZIER. And was not greatly welcome !

CALIPH. But this story of gold concealed in a jar of olives ! I like it not !

GRAND VIZIER. We ourselves know that it was but a jar of olives.

CALIPH. Seemingly ! Yet had we no right to know it.

GRAND VIZIER (*pompously*). I myself am prepared to swear —

CALIPH. To nothing. My mind misgives me over this case.

GRAND VIZIER (*shaking his head*). And mine !

CALIPH. Thou ! Thou hast no mind !

GRAND VIZIER. Here be the ladies that we met at Hous-sain's table.

CALIPH. It falls out well. I would fain learn more of this Badoura.

(Enter FATIMA and BADOURA, L.)

FATIMA. Poor, dear Ali ! But we all know that the jar contained only olives.

BADOURA (*pettishly*). Thou needest not deafen me with it perpetually.

FATIMA. Never have I spoken of it before ! But when Houssain opened the jar —

BADOURA. We saw they were olives. But there is no need to say so. Houssain hath but to swear before the Cadi that 'twas the jar as Ali left it and there is no more to be said.

FATIMA. Why, there be the two merchants, and they saw the jar opened.

(CALIPH and GRAND VIZIER advance.)

CALIPH (*down R.*). Greeting, fair ladies.

GRAND VIZIER. Greetings, fair ones.

FATIMA. Salutation, worthy merchants. Have ye come to hear the trial?

CALIPH. As to the jar of olives? So thy friend hath returned?

FATIMA. Alas, poor man! His travels have sent his wits astray. He prates of a rich convoy of camels.

BADOURA (*down L.*). Which come not.

FATIMA (*down L.*). And now he would have us believe that a jar of olives was once a jar of gold. And we ourselves saw them to be olives.

GRAND VIZIER. Ay, verily, we saw them to be olives.

BADOURA. Truly, my soul loathes the very name "olive."

CALIPH. But was not this Ali Cogia thy betrothed?

BADOURA. What if he were? I cast myself not away upon a penniless laggard.

FATIMA. They come! See, they come!

(Enter CADI, HOUSSAIN and ALI COGIA, R.; *shouts.*)

SLAVE (*making proclamation*). Make way, make way for the most honored the Cadi. (*Clouts the little boy Assad.*) Hast thou no reverence? (*The CADI takes his place up c.*) Silence, ye dogs. The most worshipful the Cadi will speak.

CADI. Summon before us Ali Cogia, the seller of antiques.

SLAVE. Stand forth, Ali Cogia.

(ALI COGIA *advances and salaams.*)

CADI. Bid Houssain, the corn merchant, appear.

SLAVE. Come forth, Houssain.

(HOUSSAIN *advances and salaams.*)

CADI. Speak, Ali Cogia. Say what is the nature of thy complaint against Houssain.

ALI COGIA. Most reverend Cadi, Houssain is a traitor foresworn.

CADI. How knowest thou that?

ALI COGIA. Four years past I entrusted to this Houssain a jar of olives, and now he denies the charge.

HOUSSAIN. I deny it not.

CADI. Peace, Houssain. Continue, Ali Cogia.

ALI COGIA. Now he refuses to render it to me.

HOUSSAIN. I offered it to thee; thou didst refuse it.

ALI COGIA. Refused it? Ay, verily, when thou hadst robbed it of its wealth.

CADI. Was the jar emptied of the olives?

ALI COGIA. The *olives* he tendered me —

CADI. What then is thy complaint?

ALI COGIA. My gold—my gold was missing.

CADI. Gold? Thou saidst nought of gold before.

HOUSSAIN. 'Twas the first I had heard of it when he demanded it yester even.

CADI. Ha!

HOUSSAIN. Most worshipful Cadi, the man is mad. 'Tis true he came to me four years agone, desiring me to store for him a jar of olives. It seemed the request of a fool, but to please him, I consented, and I have now restored to him the selfsame jar. He said no word of gold.

ALI COGIA. But gold I had stored, a thousand pieces, at the bottom of the jar.

CADI. Didst thou tell thy friend that the gold was there?

ALI COGIA. No, but —

CADI. Canst thou bring witness to the placing of the gold in the jar?

ALI COGIA. No, but —

CADI. Houssain, the corn merchant, wilt thou make oath that thou hast not taken this gold?

HOUSSAIN. By the tomb of the Prophet, I swear it.

CADI. Then is Houssain guiltless.

ALI COGIA. But my lord Cadi —

CADI. Silence! Thou hast brought a charge that thou canst not prove against a worthy merchant well known in Bagdad. Be thankful that he doth not call thee to account for a base and malicious slanderer.

HOUSSAIN (*magnanimously*). Nay, that I will never do. Once I called that man friend.

(*Murmurs of applause from crowd.*)

ALI COGIA. Thou, thou false one, thou robber, thou —

(*Slave hustles him away, L.*) I will appeal to the Caliph! I will have justice!

(*The CADI retires with his attendants, L.*)

FATIMA. There are few young men of so forgiving a spirit as Houssain.

CALIPH. It is easy to forgive when one has won.

BADOURA. Won, indeed ! Had I been the Cadi, Ali should have suffered for his madness.

CALIPH. Methought thy sympathies had been with this Ali.

BADOURA (*indignantly*). Why, indeed ?

CALIPH. Wert thou not his promised bride ?

BADOURA. I ? I am the bride of Houssain. Come, mother, it draws to the midday hour.

(BADOURA and FATIMA *go out*, L.)

CALIPH. I envy not Houssain.

GRAND VIZIER. Nay, nor I either.

ASSAD. For my part, I had judged otherwise.

CALIPH. Sayst thou so, young Solomon ?

ASSAD. Ay, and I'll not fail to be present when Haroun is appealed to ; I would see if our Caliph be wiser than the Cadi.

CALIPH. Art thou wiser than both ?

ASSAD. I am wiser than the Cadi. Could I see the Caliph, I would tell him how to judge which speaks truth, Ali or Houssain. (*Goes R.*)

CALIPH. Thou shalt see the Caliph. Stay here.

(*Seizes him.*)

ASSAD. Leave me alone, I say. Leave me alone ! Thou art not the Caliph !

ZILLAH. Thou brigand, leave my son alone. (*Hits at him with a broom.*) Thou might'st be the Caliph's self.

GRAND VIZIER. Thou profane, thou godless woman.

(*Begins to pommel her.*)

CALIPH (*wresting the broom from the woman*). Thou art a fool, Grand Vizier. (GRAND VIZIER *prostrates himself.*) I am the Caliph's self, good woman.

ZILLAH. Thou the Caliph ! (*Flings herself on the ground.*) Have mercy, have mercy ! Thy slave knew thee not. (*Grovels before the CALIPH.*)

CALIPH (*to ASSAD*). Up with thee to the Cadi's seat. (*Pushes him to the seat. To GRAND VIZIER.*) Call them all back—Houssain, Ali, the Cadi, all.

(GRAND VIZIER *salaams* and exits L.)

ASSAD (*seating himself*). Thou the Caliph? Where be thy fine clothes?

CALIPH. Judge wisely to-day, and thou shalt see them at my palace.

ASSAD. I will do my best.

(Enter L., GRAND VIZIER and the CADI, with others of the crowd. All prostrate themselves before the CALIPH.)

CALIPH. Peace be with you. Rise. (*They rise. To GRAND VIZIER.*) Are Ali Cogia and Houssain in attendance?

GRAND VIZIER. They wait thy pleasure without, great Caliph.

CALIPH. And have the litters returned with Badoura and her mother?

GRAND VIZIER. They, too, are come.

CALIPH. Go, summon them to our presence. (*Exit GRAND VIZIER, L.*) Come hither, Assad. (*ASSAD bows awkwardly.*) Dost thou still think thou canst do justice in this case?

ASSAD (*nodding vigorously*). Ay, I know the way of it. But I must have hither Ganem, the Fruit-seller, Ahmed, the Olive-grower, and Noureddin, the Gardener.

CALIPH. They shall attend. (*Takes a cushion, R.*)

(Reenter GRAND VIZIER, L., accompanied by ALI COGIA and HOUSSAIN, the ladies following. They prostrate themselves before the CALIPH.)

ASSAD (*meaningly*). I sit in the Caliph's seat.

(*They stare astonished.*)

CALIPH (*gravely*). Do reverence to the judge.

(*They prostrate themselves hastily.*)

ASSAD (*to FATIMA and BADOURA*). Women, be seated. Ali Cogia and Houssain, stand forward. Grand Vizier, bring me at once the jar of olives.

GRAND VIZIER (*indignantly*). Great Caliph!

CALIPH. Do as thou art bidden.

ASSAD. Thou art fat, but thou hast but to go into the next room. (*Exit GRAND VIZIER, R.*) Caliph, which of

thy slaves runs fastest? Let him fetch the three merchants. (*The CALIPH gives orders, and a slave exits L. To the GRAND VIZIER, who enters.*) Put the jar down gently.

HOUSSAIN. Great Caliph, the learned Cadi has judged my case. Must I now plead it again, and to a child?

CALIPH. So shall thy innocence be established before many witnesses.

ASSAD. Ali Cogia, what is thy tale about the olives? And thou, Houssain, hold thy peace until thou art spoken to.

ALI COGIA. O youthful judge, I have had many misfortunes, and knowing perils to beset the path of the traveler, I set aside a thousand pieces of gold against my return, if, per-adventure, I should not prosper.

ASSAD. Where didst thou put the gold?

ALI COGIA. At the bottom of that jar that stands beside thee. I filled it up with olives, sealed it, and delivered it into the hands of this Houssain, whom I had believed my friend.

ASSAD. And how long since was this?

ALI COGIA. Four years ago, young sir.

ASSAD. And on thy return?

ALI COGIA. I demanded the jar from Houssain, and the olives truly were there, but the gold was missing.

ASSAD. Thou hast told thy tale. Now, Houssain, what hast thou to say?

HOUSSAIN. Wisest of judges, this Ali did indeed give—as he himself said at the time—a jar of olives, and I have given it to him again.

ASSAD. And the gold?

HOUSSAIN. Nought had I heard of gold in the case until Ali Cogia returned two days since, a beggar—

ALI COGIA. I am no beggar!

ASSAD. Peace, Ali. (*To HOUSSAIN.*) Thou hast sworn to the Cadi that thou hast not taken the gold.

HOUSSAIN. Ay, and I will swear a thousand times if it pleases thee.

ASSAD. It needs not. And these are the very olives that Ali Cogia gave thee?

HOUSSAIN. What else should they be?

(*FATIMA and BADOURA exchange glances.*)

ASSAD. Bid the merchants enter. (*The three enter, and after salutation, seat themselves in a row, L.* ASSAD

takes up the jar and carries it to each of them in turn, and then to the CALIPH.) Take an olive, Noureddin. And thou, nay, this large one. And thou, Ganem—here is one for thee. (*To the CALIPH.*) Nay, thou must have one, too. And here is mine. Now eat them; a big mouthful.

HOUSSAIN (*angrily*). What folly is this?

GRAND VIZIER. Silence, dog!

ASSAD. How does thy olive taste, Caliph?

CALIPH. Excellent, O Assad.

ASSAD. And thine, Noureddin?

NOUREDDIN. A fair flavor.

ASSAD. And thine, Ganem? And thine, Ahmed?

GANEM. Ripe and refreshing.

AHMED. This year's fruit is fine.

ASSAD. Are they olives of this year's growth?

NOUREDDIN. Certainly!

AHMED. Undoubtedly!

GANEM. What else?

ASSAD. Ye be sure that they are not four years old?

(HOUSSAIN *starts.*)

GANEM. Impossible!

AHMED. They would be shriveled if four years old, and these be unwrinkled.

NOUREDDIN. Have I not taught thee how to judge of olives?

ASSAD. And I, Assad, say they be of this year's growth. Yet hath Ali Cogia been away these four years—wherefore these be none of his olives.

CALIPH. By the beard of the Prophet, boy, thou hast judged wisely.

HOUSSAIN (*groveling*). Have mercy, have mercy. I confess it all.

ONE OF THE CROWD. Truly the boy is a marvel!

ANOTHER. Wisdom, indeed!

A THIRD. The Caliph ever sees where wisdom lurks.

ASSAD. Where be the thousand pieces of gold?

HOUSSAIN. I will restore them. I will make amends.

ASSAD (*to the CALIPH, gleefully*). I told thee I could find out the truth.

CALIPH. Great is thy wisdom, sapient youth, and loudly dost thou proclaim it. And now, what is thine award?

ASSAD. My what?

CALIPH. How wilt thou mete out punishment and recompense?

ASSAD (*joyfully*). Shall I do that, too?

CALIPH. Ay, but see that thou art just.

ASSAD (*kicking Houssain*). Get up, Houssain. Thou shalt pay Ali Cogia—let me see—two thousand pieces of gold, and, because thou hast warehoused his olives these four years, thou shalt have the jar for rent.

HOUSSAIN. Then am I a ruined man.

BADOURA (*coming forward*). And deservest to be! Thou hast deceived all thy friends, and shamefully hast thou deceived me with thy lies concerning Ali Cogia. (*Weeps.*) But thou, Ali Cogia—

ALI COGIA. I trusted both him and thee, and I am doubly deceived.

BADOURA. I believed but as I was told, and how should I know aught of the world? Thou wilt forgive me, Ali?

ALI COGIA. Ay, freely. What concern have I with Houssain's bride?

BADOURA. Never will I wed with Houssain.

HOUSSAIN. Nay, that thou wilt not! I can no longer afford luxuries.

BADOURA. Four years have I waited—

CALIPH. And art like to wait longer, methinks, fair lady.

BADOURA. For thee have I wasted my youth, Ali, and shall I have nothing?

CALIPH. What sayst thou, boy? Hath the lady a claim to aught?

ASSAD. Stand forth, Badoura! Which of these two dost thou claim as thy husband?

BADOURA. Ali Cogia, thou simpleton.

ALI COGIA. Thou shameless one! Didst thou not betray me for Houssain? I will have none of thee!

ASSAD. And later, wast thou not betrothed to Houssain? What sayest thou, Houssain?

HOUSSAIN. Shall I take her whom Ali Cogia hath cast off?

ASSAD (*to BADOURA*). So hast thou lost two husbands! And thou hast wasted four years! Truly, I pity thee. Thou shalt have as amends—the olives! Perchance Hous-sain will store them for thee in his jar!

(*Sensation; laughter and applause. BADOURA faints, but is neglected by every one.*)

FATIMA. I knew Houssain should never have opened that jar of olives !

(*As curtain falls, every one presses round ALI COGIA to congratulate him. Scene of rejoicing.*)

CURTAIN

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